

“Are Other People Worth This?”: A Question for Worriers Like Me

I was driving along a beautiful sunlit, golden leaf-gilded neighborhood road the other morning on my way to work. I see this same road every morning, but today I noticed its beauty.

When you notice something beautiful on the way to work, you notice everything about work that makes you *not* notice the beauty.

I became aware of how much time and joy I sometimes let work stresses – all around the reactions, opinions, and demands of other people – take away from me. I also became aware of how much less worthy those other people seemed relative to the simple scene of beauty around me.

It's not that my colleagues, stakeholders, customers, and superiors don't matter. They're wonderful people, and it's my job to create value for them. But when I really think about how much worry I let myself feel about their reactions and decisions and expectations, I can't square the circle. They're just people, with flaws and limitations like me. They're not more important than a joy-filled experience of life. And whatever their merits or importance, they aren't good or important enough to have the power of “eminent domain” when it comes to my moment-by-moment existence.

You might ask yourself the same question. If you really think about it, is Bob from accounting the kind of guy you would surrender your most precious birthright to? Probably not. But if you let Bob from accounting keep you on edge every morning on the way to work, you've just lost the joy of those tree-lined drives and crisp fall airs from your Mondays through Fridays. And when you lose that, you lose a part of your power to experience the fullness of life. Is Bob worth it?

If you're shaking your head right now, good.